

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

In fact, Catherine's prolonged sojourn in the contado was arousing political suspicions as well as perplexing and distressing her friends, and troubles of every kind seemed gathering round her. While she was at Sant' Antimo, the archpriest of Montalcino, impelled thereto by his hatred of the Abbot Giovanni di Gano, laid complaints against both her and him before the government. Catherine at once despatched Pietro di Giovanni Ventura in her name to Siena with a letter to the Defenders and the Captain of the People, warning them not to set "the servants of God" against them by listening to slanderous tongues. She declared that the Abbot was "as great and perfect a servant of God as there has been in these parts for a very long time," and that they ought to reverence and assist him in his work. "You complain every day that the priests and other ecclesiastics are not corrected, and now, when you find those who would fain correct them, you prevent it and raise complaints." As to the accusations against her and her company, they ought to turn a deaf ear to them. "We have sought and are continually seeking the salvation of your souls and bodies, not heeding any labour, but offering sweet and loving desires to God, with abundance of tears and sighs, to prevent the divine judgments falling upon you which we deserve for our iniquities. I have not enough virtue to do aught but what is imperfect; but the others, who are perfect and attend only to the honour of God and the salvation of souls, are those who do it. But neither the ingratitude nor the churlishness of my fellow-citizens shall prevent me labouring even to death for your salvation. We shall learn from that sweet Paul, who says : *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it*,- we shall follow his rule. The truth shall be what will set us free. I love you more than you love yourselves; and I love your pacific state and your freedom, even as you do. So do not believe that anything against it is being done, either by me or by any other of my company. We are put to sow the word

Cecca, Lisa, and Alessa," Sienese widows, sisters of penance of the Blessed Dominic." Cf. Tommaso Caflarini, *Tractatus super informations*, etc., p. 13.